

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method in an interactive television system for automatically answering and recording video calls, the method comprising:
 - detecting a request to establish video communication between a caller and a user of the interactive television system;
 - identifying the caller from information contained within the request;
 - notifying the user concerning the identity of the caller; [[and]]
 - in response to the user rejecting the request or not accepting the request within an established time interval:
 - sending a pre-recorded video greeting to the caller; and
 - recording ~~a video message comprising a~~ an incoming video signal received from the caller; and[[.]]
 - while the incoming video signal continues to be recorded:
 - establishing two-way communication between the user and the caller in response to a user command, the two-way communication comprising the incoming video signal and an outgoing video signal; and
 - without user intervention, recording the outgoing video signal along with the incoming video signal.

2. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein identifying comprises:
 - extracting an identifier of the caller from the request.

3. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein the identifier is selected from the group consisting of a name of the caller, a network address of the caller, a network address of an interactive television system of the caller, an image depicting the caller, and a video signal depicting the caller.

4. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the request comprises [[a]] the incoming video signal generated by a video camera associated with the caller, and wherein notifying comprises:

displaying the incoming video signal on a display device of the interactive television system.

5. (currently amended) The method of claim 4, wherein displaying comprises: displaying the incoming video signal in a Picture-in-Picture (PIP) window on the display device.

6-8. (canceled)

9. (original) The method of claim 6, further comprising:
buffering a television signal being currently displayed by the interactive television system.

10. (original) The method of claim 9, wherein buffering comprises:
encoding the television broadcast; and

storing the encoded television broadcast in a storage device.

11. (original) The method of claim 9, further comprising:

in response to the two-way video communication being terminated, playing back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the two-way video communication was established.

12. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the pre-recorded video greeting is caller-specific.

13. (currently amended) A method in an interactive television system for automatically answering and recording video calls, the method comprising:

detecting a request to establish video communication between a caller and a user of the interactive television system;

identifying a network address associated with the caller from information contained within the request;

determining whether the ~~caller is identified~~ network address is included within an auto-answer list; and

in response to the ~~caller~~ network address being included within the auto-answer list:

automatically sending a pre-recorded video greeting to the ~~caller~~ network address; and

automatically recording a video message comprising a video signal received from the caller network address.

14. (currently amended) A method in an interactive television system for automatically answering and recording video calls, the method comprising:
 - detecting a request to establish video communication between a caller and a user of the interactive television system, the request comprising a video signal generated by a video camera associated with the caller;
 - identifying the caller from information contained within the request;
 - notifying the user concerning the identity of the caller, wherein notifying comprises displaying the video signal received from the caller on a display device of the interactive television; and
 - in response to the user rejecting the request or not accepting the request within an established time interval:
 - sending a pre-recorded video greeting to the caller;
 - recording a video message comprising [[a]] the video signal received from the caller;
 - while the video message is being recorded, establishing two-way video communication between the user and the caller in response to a user command;
 - buffering a television signal being displayed by the interactive television system; and

in response to the two-way video communication being terminated,
playing back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the
two-way video communication was established.

15. (currently amended) A system for automatically answering and recording
video calls, the system comprising:

a detection component configured to detect a request to establish video
communication between a caller and a user of the interactive television system, the
request comprising a video signal generated by a video camera associated with the
caller;

an identification component configured to identify the caller from information
contained within the request;

a notification component configured to notify the user concerning the identity of
the caller, wherein notifying comprises displaying the video signal received from the
caller on a display device of the interactive television; and

an answering component configured to send a pre-recorded video greeting to the
caller and to record a video message comprising [[a]] the video signal received from the
caller in response to the user rejecting the request or not accepting the request within
an established time interval.

16. (original) The system of claim 15, wherein the identification component is
further configured to extract an identifier of the caller from the request.

17. (original) The system of claim 16, wherein the identifier is selected from the group consisting of a name of the caller, a network address of the caller, a network address of an interactive television system of the caller, an image depicting the caller, and a video signal depicting the caller.

18. (canceled)

19. (currently amended) The system of claim [18] 15, wherein the notification component is further configured to display the video signal in a Picture-in-Picture (PIP) window on the display device.

20. (original) The system of claim 15, further comprising:
a communication component configured to establish two-way video communication between the user and the caller while the video message is being recorded.

21. (original) The system of claim 20, wherein recording of the video message continues during the two-way video communication.

22. (original) The system of claim 21, wherein the two-way video communication comprises incoming and outgoing video signals, and wherein the answering component is further configured to store the incoming and outgoing video signals.

23. (original) The system of claim 20, further comprising:
a buffering component configured to buffer a television signal being currently displayed by the interactive television system.

24. (original) The system of claim 23, wherein buffering component comprises:
an encoder configured to encode the television broadcast; and
a storage device configured to store the encoded television broadcast.

25. (original) The system of claim 23, further comprising:
a playback component configured to play back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the two-way video communication was established in response to the two-way video communication being terminated.,.

26. (original) The system of claim 15, wherein the pre-recorded video greeting is caller-specific.

27. (currently amended) A system for automatically answering and recording video calls, the system comprising:
a detection component configured to detect a request to establish video communication between a caller and a user of the interactive television system;
an identification component configured to identify a network address associated with the caller from information contained within the request; and

an answering component configured, in response to the caller network address being included within an auto-answer list, to automatically send a pre-recorded video greeting to the caller network address and automatically record a video message comprising a video signal received from the caller network address.

28. (currently amended) A system for automatically answering and recording video calls, the system comprising:

a detection component configured to detect a request to establish video communication between a caller and a user of the interactive television system, the request comprising a video signal generated by a video camera associated with the caller;

an identification component configured to identify the caller from information contained within the request;

a notification component configured to notify the user concerning the identity of the caller, wherein notifying comprises displaying the video signal received from the caller on a display device of the interactive television; [[and]]

an answering component configured to send a pre-recorded video greeting to the caller in response to the user rejecting the request or not accepting the request within an established time interval and to record a video message comprising a video signal received from the caller;

a communication component configured, while the video message is being recorded, to establish two-way video communication between the user and the caller;

a buffering component configured to buffer a television signal being displayed by the interactive television system; and

a playback component configured to play back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the two-way video communication was established in response to the two-way video communication being terminated.

29. (currently amended) A system for automatically answering and recording video calls, the system comprising:

means for detecting a request to establish video communication between a caller and a user of the interactive television system;

means for identifying the caller from information contained within the request;

means for notifying the user concerning the identity of the caller; and

means for sending a pre-recorded video greeting to the caller and for recording a ~~video message comprising a~~ an incoming video signal received from the caller in response to the user rejecting the request or not accepting the request within an established time interval[.,.]; and

means for establishing two-way communication, while the incoming video signal continues to be recorded, between the user and the caller in response to a user command, the two-way communication comprising the incoming video signal and an outgoing video signal; and

means for, without user intervention, recording the outgoing video signal along with the incoming video signal.

30. (currently amended) A computer readable storage medium program product comprising program code for causing a computer to perform performing a method for automatically answering and recording video calls, the method comprising:

detecting a request to establish video communication between a caller and a user of the interactive television system, the request comprising a video signal generated by a video camera associated with the caller;

identifying the caller from information contained within the request;

notifying the user concerning the identity of the caller, wherein notifying comprises displaying the video signal received from the caller on a display device of the interactive television; and

in response to the user rejecting the request or not accepting the request within an established time interval:

sending a pre-recorded video greeting to the caller; and

recording a video message comprising [[a]] the video signal received from the caller.